

PATRICK M. COYNE,)
)
 Plaintiff,)
)
 v.) No. 4:10CV2200 FRB
)
 CITY OF DES PERES, et al.,)
)
 Defendants.)

This matter is before the Court upon the motion of Patrick Coyne, an inmate at St. Louis County Justice Center, for leave to commence this action without payment of the required filing fee [Doc. #2]. For the reasons stated below, the Court finds that plaintiff does not have sufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee and will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$8.67. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). Furthermore, based upon a review of the complaint, the Court finds that the complaint should be dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B).

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), a prisoner bringing a civil action in forma pauperis is required to pay the full amount of the filing fee. If the prisoner has insufficient funds in his or her prison account to pay the entire fee, the Court must

assess and, when funds exist, collect an initial partial filing fee of 20 percent of the greater of (1) the average monthly deposits in the prisoner's account, or (2) the average monthly balance in the prisoner's account for the prior six-month period. After payment of the initial partial filing fee, the prisoner is required to make monthly payments of 20 percent of the preceding month's income credited to the prisoner's account. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The agency having custody of the prisoner will forward these monthly payments to the Clerk of Court each time the amount in the prisoner's account exceeds \$10, until the filing fee is fully paid. Id.

Plaintiff has submitted an affidavit and a certified copy of his prison account statement for the six-month period immediately preceding the submission of his complaint. A review of plaintiff's account indicates an average monthly deposit of \$43.33, and an average monthly balance of \$13.30. Plaintiff has insufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee. Accordingly, the Court will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$8.67, which is 20 percent of plaintiff's average monthly deposit.

28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must dismiss a complaint filed in forma pauperis if the action is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. An action is frivolous if it "lacks an arguable basis in either law or fact."

Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 328 (1989); Denton v. Hernandez, 504 U.S. 25, 31 (1992). An action is malicious if it is undertaken for the purpose of harassing the named defendants and not for the purpose of vindicating a cognizable right. Spencer v. Rhodes, 656 F. Supp. 458, 461-63 (E.D.N.C. 1987), aff'd 826 F.2d 1059 (4th Cir. 1987). A complaint fails to state a claim if it does not plead “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly, 550 U.S. 544, 570 (2007).

The Complaint

Plaintiff brings this action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, the American With Disabilities Act, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Named as defendants are the City of Des Peres, the St. Louis County Justice Center, Robert McCulloch (prosecutor), St. Louis County, the City of Ladue, David Doss (police officer), Thea A. Sherry (judge), Larry Kendrick (judge), Mary Bruntrager (judge), and Mark Seigel (judge). Plaintiff seeks monetary and injunctive relief.

Plaintiff alleges, in a wholly conclusory manner, that his rights have been violated for the past sixteen years in state court child custody proceedings. Plaintiff alleges that he has been incarcerated several times in violation of his rights. Plaintiff further alleges that he has lost his career and has suffered from emotional distress as a result of the alleged violations.

Discussion

The complaint is legally frivolous because it is wholly conclusory and fails to allege any facts, which if proved, would entitle plaintiff to relief.

Additionally, the Court notes that pursuant to the "domestic relations exception," federal courts are divested of jurisdiction over any action in which the subject is divorce, the allowance of alimony, or child custody. Kahn v. Kahn, 21 F.3d 859, 861 (8th Cir. 1994). When a cause of action closely relates to, but does not precisely fit into the contours of an action for divorce, alimony, or child custody, federal courts generally will abstain from exercising jurisdiction. Id. Thus, the "domestic relations exception" would divest this Court of jurisdiction over plaintiff's complaint, even if it did state a claim for relief.

The complaint is legally frivolous as to defendants Sherry, Kendrick, Bruntrager, and Seigel because judges are "entitled to absolute immunity for all judicial actions that are not 'taken in a complete absence of all jurisdiction.'" Penn v. United States, 335 F.3d 786, 789 (8th Cir. 2003) (quoting Mireles v. Waco, 502 U.S. 9, 11-12 (1991)).

The complaint is legally frivolous as to defendant McCulloch because where "the prosecutor is acting as advocate for the state in a criminal prosecution, [] the prosecutor is entitled to absolute immunity." Brodnicki v. City of Omaha, 75 F.3d 1261, 1266 (8th Cir. 1996).

The complaint is silent as to whether defendant Doss is being sued in his official or individual capacity. Where a “complaint is silent about the capacity in which [plaintiff] is suing defendant, [a district court must] interpret the complaint as including only official-capacity claims.” Egerdahl v. Hibbing Community College, 72 F.3d 615, 619 (8th Cir. 1995); Nix v. Norman, 879 F.2d 429, 431 (8th Cir. 1989). Naming a government official in his or her official capacity is the equivalent of naming the government entity that employs the official. Will v. Michigan Dep’t of State Police, 491 U.S. 58, 71 (1989). To state a claim against a municipality or a government official in his or her official capacity, plaintiff must allege that a policy or custom of the government entity is responsible for the alleged constitutional violation. Monell v. Dep’t of Social Services, 436 U.S. 658, 690-91 (1978). The instant complaint does not contain any allegations that a policy or custom of a government entity was responsible for the alleged violations of plaintiff’s constitutional rights. As a result, the complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted as to defendant Doss. Additionally, the complaint fails to state a claim against the City of Des Peres, St. Louis County, or the City of Ladue for the same reason.

Finally, plaintiff’s claim against St. Louis County Justice Center is legally frivolous because it is not a suable entity. Ketchum v. City of West Memphis, Ark., 974 F.2d 81, 81 (8th Cir. 1992) (departments or subdivisions of local government are

“not juridical entities suable as such.”); Catlett v. Jefferson County, 299 F. Supp. 2d 967, 968-69 (E.D. Mo. 2004) (same).

Accordingly,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that plaintiff’s motion to proceed in forma pauperis [Doc. #2] is **GRANTED**.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the plaintiff shall pay an initial filing fee of \$8.67 within thirty (30) days of the date of this Order. Plaintiff is instructed to make his remittance payable to “Clerk, United States District Court,” and to include upon it: (1) his name; (2) his prison registration number; (3) the case number; and (4) that the remittance is for an original proceeding.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Clerk shall not issue process or cause process to issue upon the complaint because the complaint is legally frivolous or fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or both.

An Order of Dismissal will accompany this Memorandum and Order.

Dated this 3rd day of January, 2011.



RODNEY W. SIPPEL
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE